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Tibetan Oral History Project

Taring and Sambo were important aristocratic officials in the Tibetan government. They discuss in detail about the composition of the two Tibetan assemblies, the Tsondu gyenzom and the Tsondu hragdu gyepa, and how they functioned to make decisions. The subjects also explain that the reason Langdün and Reting didn't get along well was because of the argument over whether Langdün's son might have been the reincarnation of the 13th Dalai Lama and how even officials like Lukhangwa suggested that it would be better to find the incarnation from nearby. The subjects also discuss the Panchen Lama's plan to return to Tibet and how the Tsondu decided not to allow the Panchen Lama to return bringing his 500 bodyguards. The subjects also discuss the Trimön incident and how the Panchen Lama's favorite, Jensel Lobsang was tortured to death. The subjects finally discuss in detail the office of the Political Officer in Sikkim.

Q

[In the assembly] There were the Trungtsi (the two Trunyichemmo and the Tsipön) and the representatives of the various position/ranks, right?

A

(Mr. Taring) And the representatives of the ranks (of officials).

Q

The hragdu gyepa was also the same, right?

A

(Mrs. Taring) In the Tsondu hragdu gyepa, probably all the government officials were there, right?

Q

No, they weren't.

A

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(Mr. Taring) In the hragdu, the Trungtsi and the representatives of Sendregasum were included. In the hragdu gyepa, the representatives of all the [government official] ranks were included also.

Q

I can explain the hragdu gyepa. It had the principal important persons sitting facing towards the door. These were the representatives of the dzasa and theiji. And from the right sitting facing towards the left were the Trunyichemmo and the Tsipön, and from the left to the right were the monastery abbots from the Drepung, Ganden and Sera. Behind the Trungtsi were the representatives of the khenche and khenjung rank and the representatives of the fourth ranking officials, the senampa and other letsenpa and ordinary government representatives. This was called the hragdu gyepa. What was the hragdu?

A

(Mr. Taring) It consisted of the Trungtsi and the abbots of Sendregasum.

Q

What was the Tsondu gyendzom?

A

(Mr. Taring) In the Tsondu gyendzom there was one representative of the Kashag. I remember that Ngabö was attending as the Kashag's representative and also even those above the house managers (tib. khangnyer [khang gnyer]) like the trunztog [tib. drung gtogs] wore the trungsens [tib. drung gzan].

Q

They were not representatives, right?

A

(Mr. Sambo) Yes. All of them had to attend. It was said the representatives of all the monks and lay people in Ü and Tsang [tib. dbus gtsang lha sde mi sde] were included. And on top of that, the four Labrangs (Lings) of Lhasa: Kündeling [tib. kun bde gling], Tsomönling, and Tshechog Ling [tib. tshe mchog gling] were part.

(Mrs. Taring) And there were also representatives of the craftsmen.

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(Mr. Taring) The major decisions were made by the hragdu gyepa and not by the Tsondu gyendzom, for example, the decision to send Ketsang Rinpoche and Kusangtse and so forth in one group and Phurbujog [tib. phur bu lcog] and others in another group to Lhoka. So sending the three groups to search for the Dalai Lama was the decision of the hragdu gyepa.

Q

By the time they sent these three groups to look for the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama did they know that the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama was in Amdo?

A

(Mr. Taring) Probably they knew. This was stated clearly in the book written by Kusangtse.

Q

I heard that at that time a horse from Norbulinga ran away into Yabshi Langdün's House so people said that the Dalai Lama must be born in Langdün, and even in the hragdu gyepa some people suggested that it may be very difficult to look for the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama in the distant areas so maybe it would be better if we could take someone from nearby. It is said there was such talk. Is that true?

A

(Mr. Sambo) At that time in Yabshi Langdün, Phogpön (the Payroll Officer) who was known as Senang sey had a child who later became Detru Rinpoche. Probably this child had good signs [when he was born] so they had hope that it might work out that one candidate would be the one born in Langdün.

[Footnote: The Langdün family had two sons, one had the name of Langdün itself and the other Senang. Phogpön, who was Senang, had one son who [later] was recognized as Detru Rinpoche.]

Q

Was this discussed in the Tsondu meeting?

A

(Mr. Sambo) It might not have been said in the Tsondu, but some talked about this and others said keep quiet.

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Q

I heard that this talk was mentioned in the Tsondu. I heard that Tsipön Lukhangwa suggested that it may be very difficult to get a lama from a distant area so it would be better to have someone from nearby. It may be better for everybody. When such talk was said, Reting really insisted, going out of his way to push that the reincarnation must be thoroughly looked into and brought from a distant area. Because of this, Reting had a very difficult task. I have heard such things, are they true?

A

(Mr. Taring) I have not heard such a thing at all.

Q

When the 13th Dalai Lama died, what had happened to the Panchen Lama and what he was doing? The Panchen Lama was of course in China and he sent a representative to make an offering for the ritual of the death of the Dalai Lama. What happened?

A

(Mr. Taring) I do not remember clearly what year and what period, but I definitely remember that Rimshi Delerabten, who was known as a "Great Man" [tib. mi chen po], stayed in Trelhun Khangsar [tib. bkras lhun khang gsar] which is the house in Lhasa that belonged to Tashilhunpo Labrang. He stayed there and had long discussions about the problems between Labrang and the government. He was accompanied by the Trunyichemmo Dangchen of Tashilhunpo. He also was accompanied by five or six other representatives like Tsagserkhang [tib. rtsag ser khang] and Denyül Lhunpo [tib. ldan yul lhun po]. They discussed the problems between Labrang and the Tibetan government.

Q

Did they talk about the problems between the Tibetan government and Labrang?

A

(Mr. Taring) Yes, and not only that, the return of the Panchen Lama was also discussed by them. Even Ngagchen [tib. sngags chen] Rinpoche, one of the Tashilhunpo Lamas, was involved.

Q

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Did the representatives come to talk about the return of the Panchen Lama to Lhasa?

A

(Mr. Taring) There was talk between Labrang and the Tibetan government about their problems and this included the return of the Panchen Lama to Tibet.

Q

Was the talk mainly about the return of the Panchen Lama to Tibet or the problems between the Tashilhunpo Labrang and the Tibetan government?

A

(Mr. Sambo) It was not only about the return of the Panchen Lama. At that time, the Panchen Lama was bringing a large number of Chinese bodyguard troops with him and he was asking the Tibetan government to allow him to bring those bodyguards.

Q

There was no question of not allowing Panchen Lama to return, right?

A

(Mr. Sambo) Yes.

Q

Was it only the question of whether he could bring the Chinese bodyguards and not the question of allowing the Panchen Lama to return?

A

(Mr. Sambo) There was no talk about allowing the return of the Panchen Lama. It was only about the Chinese bodyguards which he wanted to bring with him. It was regarding this that the problems arose because at that time the Guomindang was in power.

Q

At that time, the Chinese offered the Panchen Lama the title the "Great Intellectual Governor of the Western area [tib. nub phyogs sa khul gyi shes yon spyi khyab chen po] and he came up to Jyekundo. At that time, the [Tibetan government's] Nanjing Bureau reported to the Tibetan government about this title.

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A

(Mr. Sambo) The Nanjing Bureau was called the Khendrönlosum [tib. mkhan mgron lo gsum].

Q

What was the "Dalai's Bureau" [tib. ta la'i ch. ban shi qu]?

A

(Mr. Sambo) Later when they moved the capital from Nanjing to Beijing, it was called the Dalai's Bureau.

Q

I heard that the Panchen Lama traveled to Jyekundo along with 500 Chinese soldiers and that he was stopped by the government. Why did the Tibetan government stop them?

A

(Mr. Sambo) The problem was that the Tibetan government and the Panchen Lama were not getting along well and the Tibetan government thought that if he brings these soldiers it might create problems in Tibet later. This was the major doubt that the Tibet Government had so they stopped the soldiers from coming.

(Mrs. Taring) Did they talk about that before the death of the 13th Dalai Lama?

Q

No, it was after that. It was during the Reting period. Not only that, but in the meeting they mentioned that the Panchen Lama has already arrived in Jyekundo and sent an "arrow letter," (tib. dayig [mda' yig]) that was given to the Tsondu. What is an "arrow letter"?

A

(Mr. Sambo) They wrote a letter on a piece of paper and rolled it around a bamboo arrow. It said that on such a day we are leaving on such and such a day we are passing through such and such an area and so the people there have to make arrangement for corvée horses and pack animals, accommodations, etc. We sent this sort of open letter rolled in an arrow and people carried it from area to area informing the people there of the arrival. This was called an "arrow letter."

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Q

So you did not send a messenger with the letter?

A

(Mr. Taring) Such a letter was not normally carried by one person to the next village. The adrung [messenger] carried it.

(Mr. Sambo) Not only that, wherever the shape went they send an arrow letter.

Q

Wasn't this a notice [tib. brda tho]?

A

(Mr. Sambo) It was not a notice. It was an "arrow letter." Normally they put some kind of red cotton called Lena on the arrow and they wrote on that. It would be read by every district or area and then passed on to the next. That is why it went very fast like an arrow and so it was called an "arrow letter".

Q

Thank you. Please tell me in detail what happened about return of the Panchen Rinpoche at that time.

A

(Mr. Taring) The Panchen Lama had been talking about his return to Tibet and while this talk was going on, he died at Rakshi Lungshö Monastery. It is near Jyekundo. The Panchen Lama had been planning to return, but he died on the way.

Q

He died at Rakshi Lungshö Monastery near Jyekundo. The Panchen Lama had been planning to return but died on the way. The Tibetan Government finally decided that they were not going to allow the bodyguards of the Panchen Lama.

A

(Mr. Taring) That's why the Panchen Lama could not come. That was the problem.

Q

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How did it all happen? The Panchen Lama went to China because of the Lungshar's plan of levying taxes on newly opened fields (tib. babshi ['bab zhib]). When the Panchen Lama was returning there was no talk that he should not return. He was bringing a large number of bodyguards and got himself a big title from the Chinese, so when he was returning with these the Tibetan Government had become sort of uneasy. Was this stopping of the Panchen Lama the Tibetan government's decision or was it influenced by the English Government?

A

(Mr. Taring) This was mainly the Tibetan government's decision. The Tibetan government did not want a large number of Chinese coming to Tibet again. As I said earlier, on a government to government level, there was no connection at all between Tibet and China. Only a few Chinese traders were around. Otherwise no Chinese government connections were there at that time.

Q

When the Panchen Lama was staying at Jyekundo, the great Phabongkha met him and the Panchen Lama wanted Phabongkha to intervene. Phabongkha wrote a large number of letters to the Tibetan government's decision makers who happened to be his disciples or followers. For example, even in the Kashag, quite a lot of the shapes were disciples of Phabongkha. And certain numbers of Kashag wrote internal letters to Phabongkha. Finally, Reting wrote a letter to Phabongkha saying that he had kept in mind Phabongkha's desire [for the Panchen to return], however the Tsondu gyendzom had decided and so he could not do anything. In this it seems that the British might have influenced the government .

Q

(Footnote: The questions I put here are clearly mentioned in the biography of the Phabongkha recently published in Lhasa.)

A

(Mr. Taring) Whatever may be, the visit of the Panchen Lama to China was mainly because of babshi problem. At that time the Tibetan government sent Tsögo Depön to pursue the Panchen Lama with quite a number of soldiers to prevent him from fleeing from Tibet. They went through Nagchu. At that time the people of Lhasa sang a song about this that said, "The Panchen Lama flew high in the sky saying that he is a vulture, and

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Tsögo came sniffing around saying that he is a hound." [tib. pan chen rgod po yin zer/ nam 'phang bcad nas phebs song/ mtsho sgo sha khyi yin zer/ dri ma snam nas sleb byung].

(Mr. Sambo) At that time Lungshar and Tsögo were together.

Q

Did Lungshar chase the Panchen Lama? I don't think so.

A

(Mr. Sambo) Yes, I think he did. The famous Tsögo, the great hero, these two went together and in the evening they spent the night together. They even slept together.

(Mr. Taring) The two of them were friendly, right?

(Mr. Sambo) Tsögo was known as a kind of rascal and when they traveled for a long distance, Lungshar thought that he might even kill him. So he slept with him.

Q

You mean to say that Lungshar went to catch the Panchen Lama.

A

Yes.

Q

I heard that the Tsondu decided that if the Panchen Lama came we have no objection, but these soldiers or bodyguards were not allowed. The Tsondu took a written oath about this. Is this true?

A

(Mr. Sambo) Probably it is true.

(Mrs. Taring) At that time I remember Yungön Könchok Jungne [tib. dkon jog 'byung gnas] who later was known as Talama, came to Tibet with a Chinese lady named Liu Jiwen as a representative of the Guomindang Government. They were doing something. I do not know what they were doing, but they were doing something. I could not find out what they were doing.

Q

The Yungön Talama was the member of the Khendrönlosum, right?

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A

(Mrs. Taring) He was very important. He was very close with the late 13th Dalai Lama and it was just before the death of the 13th Dalai Lama's death that he brought that Chinese woman with him. He stayed in the Tsarong House.

Q

Was that Chinese woman his wife?

A

(Mrs. Taring) No, no. She was definitely the Chinese representative and one of the most important ones. It was definitely an important event but nobody seemed to know much, so it is important to find out about it. It was probably in 1931 or 1932. Later they returned via India. Talama also went with them. Did you hear about this?

Q

No. I have to do some research on this. She must be the first representative.

A

(Mr. Sambo) A little while after this, the Dalai's Bureau was established. The Communist Chinese told me that the Dalai's Bureau was established a little after that.

(Mrs. Taring) When Könchok Jungne first went, he went as the abbot of Yungön Monastery [in Beijing]. However he was just a humble geshe and wasn't very learned. Sometimes people like him were appointed as the abbot of Yungön Monastery, but the way they appointed him as the abbot and also the way he acted, it seems that he was more than an abbot. He seemed to have a political mission. Even Tsarong Sawangchemmo was involved and they even chose one of his servants, who was a more learned geshe. So the two of them went, but the more learned geshe died in China. When that geshe died, they needed another geshe, someone whom he trusted, so Tsarong's nephew Yeshe Dargye [tib. ye shes dar rgyas] was sent there. At that time Tsarong Sawangchemmo used to send his merchants to China to do business. Among those merchants were Thupten Chungchung [tib. thub bstan chung chung] and Tsültrim Nyima [tib. tshul khriims nyi ma], etc. They were not simply doing trade, but they were doing something more than that which he did not know. So later all those sent for business came back with Yungön Talama who was shown great favor by the late Dalai Lama. There is something to be learned in these events.

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Q

How did it start? What position did it have? Was it the Dalai Lama's private representative or the Tibetan Government's bureau?

A

(Mr. Taring) It was the Dalai Lama's private office. On the one hand, it looked like the Dalai Lama's private representative and on the other hand it looked like the Tibetan Government's Bureau.

(Mrs. Taring) There was no Dalai Lama's private representative in China at all. I knew that very well. When the first Khendrönlosum was sent, it was Phara Khenjung and another person I don't remember. So later when Yungön Talama returned to Tibet, he joined the Foreign Office of Tibet and that was the beginning of the Foreign Office. It was during the Taktra period.

(Mr. Sambo) The presence of the Khendrönlosum was necessitated by the fact that the mother of the Chinese Emperor needed to do the thrüsü [tib. khrus gsol] religious ceremony. This had to be done every day for the Emperor's mother. To perform this ceremony, it was necessary to have one abbot from Sera or Drepung. To assist the abbot, one tsendrön and one interpreter [tib. lo tsa ba] was sent with him. This is how it came to be called Khendrönlosum. This is how it started. Later, since they were there in China, the government's political work was also done through them instead of sending other people to do the same job. They became the official channel of the Tibetan government.

Q

When did Könchok Jungne return to Lhasa? Because we have just said that during this period there was no connection between the Chinese and Tibetan governments, however Khendrönlosum was already in China. So that's why I want to know what year Könchok Jungne returned to Lhasa.

A

(Mrs. Taring) Khendrönlosum was first started in 1931-1932.

Q

Who bore the expenditure of Khendrönlosum in China?

A

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(Mr. Sambo) Most probably they were paid salary by the Chinese office called the Tibet-Mongol Affairs Office [tib. bod sog las khungs]. This was the Chinese office that paid their salaries.

(Mr. Taring) Actually, this Khendrönlosum was same as the Bösog lekhung (Tibet-Mongol Affairs Office) except it was named differently.

Q

The Bösog Lekhung was a Chinese Government office.

A

(Mr. Taring) If so, where was the Tibetan representative?

Q

That office just dealt with Tibetan and Mongolian matters.

A

(Mrs. Taring) They held negotiations and discussions with that office. I heard about the existence of a similar office in Taiwan too. Maybe it is still there.

Q

Is the Bösog lekhung still there in China?

A

(Mr. Sambo) Now there is neither the Bösog lekhung nor the Dalai's Bureau. The Panchen's Bureau is still there. This year I heard something about the Dalai's Bureau.

Q

When was the Panchen's Bureau started?

A

(Mrs. Taring) It was started in 1954. It was very similar to the Dalai's Bureau. There was no Panchen Bureau before that. Probably, since the Dalai's Bureau was already there, they set up the Panchen's Bureau too. Both had similar status. As far as the office building was concerned, the Dalai's Bureau was far better. It was previously the office of the Japanese representative. It really looked like a palace.

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Q

Was it that big?

A

(Mrs. Taring) It was very big. It had three main gates and the palace was in the inner chamber. Before the Chinese revolution, it was the palace of the Emperor's uncle. During the Dalai Lama's visit to China, probably in 1954, the Dalai's Bureau was represented by Dönwang [tib. don dbang] Khenjung and Dingja [tib. lding bya] and Tarala.

(Mr. Sambo) Dönwang was later on. At that time, there was Ramba, Janglojen and there was also Gegyepa [tib. dge rgyas pa]. They were the Dalai's Bureau's representatives.

Q

What did they go there for?

A

(Mrs. Taring) They were the Dalai's Bureau's officers.

Q

Were there only three of them in the Bureau?

A

(Mrs. Taring) Only three of them. Since the place was huge, one portion remained closed and the remaining portion they used for their residence and office. The Panchen's Bureau was very small compared to the Dalai's Bureau. When you look at it, the Dalai's Bureau looked even better than Norbulinga. And it was situated right in the middle of the city. Inside the palace you didn't even hear the noise of the traffic outside. It was as big as a small village. Next to the Dalai Lama's palace, the whole Yabshi family could stay as the palace had so many houses. The houses where the Yabshi family stayed were equipped with a new heating system by the Chinese before the Dalai Lama's visit to China.

Q

Did the Dalai's Bureau function there continuously? One representative succeeded by another?

A

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(Mr. Sambo) No. The Dalai's Bureau returned in 1948-1949 without any successor.

Q

Who were the last Khendrönlosum at that time?

A

(Mr. Sambo) Probably, Thubten Sangbo was the Khenjung and the tsendrön was Thupten Tsenleg [tib. thub bstan legs] who was nicknamed Maboshö.

(Mr. Taring) Wasn't it Laja Thubten Sangye [tib. thub bstan sangs rgyas]?

Q

Thupten Sangye was during the World War II. There were lots of stories about the Japanese making the war, etc. and he had a Japanese style mustache.

A

(Mrs. Taring) The Khenjung of Dalai's Bureau was called the Director, chudrang [tib. qu zhang] of the Dalai's Bureau.

(Mr. Sambo) Thubten Sangye had a Japanese style mustache and when some tsidrung asked why he had such a mustache, he would say that if you had this style of mustache and went on the street people would regard you highly.

Q

What happened after they came back? It was first Thubten Sangbo, then Thubten Tsenleg and then Thubten Senge.

A

(Mr. Sambo) Thubten Senge was a monk from Ganden monastery. He was something like the representative of Ganden. Later he was appointed as a government official so probably he enjoyed the status of a Letsenpa. He was the interpreter [tib. lo tsa ba], probably he knew some Chinese. It was the time when the conflict broke out between the Guomindang and the Communists in China. Even during those days, they (Khendrönlosum) did not get along well with each other. There were rumors that they even used to send secret spies behind each other's backs. When the Communists in China were getting very strong, then they sent a telegram to the Tibetan government stating that now they may be not able to continue their stay in China since the Communists have gained power in most of the areas of China. They further said that the Chinese

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had told them to stay as the representatives of Tibet. However, they felt this was not advisable so they asked the Tibetan government when they should return to Tibet. The Tibetan government, in reply to that telegram, told them to return to Tibet. But Thubten Sangbo stayed back in Kolcutta for a while, while the other two returned in 1947. When the delegation for the Yügyel Tashidelek (War Victory Felicitations) went there, they returned back with them. But Thubten Sangbo probably stayed in Kolcutta, because Panda had met him in Kolcutta in 1949 when Shakappa, Panda and Trekhang went on a Trade Mission. They had met him in Kolcutta in 1949, so he might have come there in 1948 and stayed for over a year.

Q

Was this how the Dalai's Bureau was opened and finally closed?

A

(Mr. Sambo) The government of Tibet ordered them to return since it did not want to have any connection with the Chinese, particularly the government did not want any relations with the Communists. At that time, the Tibetan government expelled Phüntso Wangye [tib. phun tshogs dbang rgyal] and others from Lhasa. The reason for their expulsion was the apprehension that if the Communists appointed them as their representatives in Tibet, it would become a difficult situation. It was probably in June, 1949. During the signing of 17-Point Agreement in 1951, the Chinese raised the question of having a Dalai's Bureau in Beijing. At that time Ngabö almost indicated that he was willing to leave someone for a Dalai's Bureau. Internally, Ngabö told me and Thubten Lengmön [tib. thub bstan legs smon] that the two of us had to stay if the Chinese insisted. But ultimately, they did not insist, so we all returned to Tibet. If the Chinese had insisted, then probably Thubten Lengmön and I might have been asked to stay back as the representatives of the Dalai's Bureau.

Q

Sometime before this when the Panchen Lama died, some of his followers brought his body and some remained back and had a minor war with someone called Xingnan Liu Zhuxi. Some of the Panchen's officials surrendered to him and the other half brought up the remains. Is that true? How did the Panchen Lama's body reach Tibet?

A

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(Mr. Sambo) Liu Zhuxi was the Chairman of Sichuan. Probably there was some internal fight among themselves. At that time, there was a man called Khangsar Yetob [tib. khang gsar ye stob] and also a lady called Khangsar Pönmo [tib. khang gsar dpon mo] who was the leader in the Ganzi area of Trehor. She was looking for a magpa and Yetob, who was tall and handsome, happened to be her choice. But Liu Zhuxi had agreed or decided to find a magpa for Khangshar Pönmo. So somehow things did not work out and a fight broke out between them before the Panchen Lama died. Yetob was appointed as the general of the [Panchen's] cavalry force [ch. qi bing da dui zhang]. After the death of the Panchen Lama, he could not come back so he decided to be the magpa of Khangsar Pönmo, and probably that resulted in a little fight.

Q

When you mentioned that Yetob was the general of the cavalry force, does it mean that the Panchen Lama was coming to Tibet with military preparations?

A

(Mr. Sambo) Some kind of military arrangements were there. For example, the Panchen Lama had acquired a large number of guns (called pamili in Tibetan). These guns were kept under the control of Jensel Lobsang [tib. spyang bsal blo bzang], who was the favorite of the Panchen Lama. He was called Panchen Lobsang. He was in charge of the arms and ammunition and other belongings of Panchen Lama in Beijing. So he could not come to Tibet. At that time, the Japanese had seized power in Beijing and they issued orders to the effect that anyone in possession of arms and ammunition should surrender them and their values would be paid to the owner. But Panchen Lobsang did not give the arms. Six months later, another order was issued in which it was said that anyone still in possession of arms should surrender them to the authorities and they would be paid only half of the actual price. Even then, Panchen Lobsang did not surrender them. Then after a few months the Japanese issued their last order saying that all the guns and weapons should be surrendered and no value in money will be paid, but they will not be punished either. So in this way, the Japanese issued orders in China three times. However, Panchen Lobsang did not surrender his guns. During that time, a servant of the Panchen Lobsang ran away with some belongings and this man has the knowledge about the guns kept by Panchen Lobsang. So the Panchen Lobsang hired a few people to trace this man. He promised to pay them a certain amount of money on daily basis if they were able to bring him back to him. These people went out in search of that person, but after a few months they returned and said that they could not find him. Panchen Lobsang suspected that they were all in

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league with each other so when these people asked Panchen Lobsang to pay them the money promised for the few months they wasted looking for that person, he refused to pay them on the grounds that he had promised them to pay only if they brought that person to him. They could not compromise and had a fight. As a result, they informed the Japanese about the large number of guns hidden by Panchen Lobsang. On this information, the Japanese asked Panchen Lobsang where he had hidden the guns. Panchen Lobsang told them that he had hidden the guns under the ground in boxes. So the Japanese confiscated the guns and Panchen Lobsang was given severe torture. I even heard that he was forced to drink hot water and was hung upside down from the ceiling and kicked in the stomach, etc. Panchen Lobsang died as a result of the torture. There were probably two or three thousand guns.

If he had told the Japanese before about the guns, he would have got some compensation. Anyway, this finding shows that they had made some preparations to challenge the Tibetan government. The accumulation of guns and Yetob as the army commander proves the fact that they had some kind of military arrangement to challenge the Tibetan government if the government refused to allow the Panchen Lama to come with the 500 Chinese bodyguards of the Panchen Lama. But everything fizzled out.

Q

How did the body of Panchen Lama reach Tibet?

A

(Mr. Sambo) I have nothing to say about this.

(Mr. Taring) The officials of Panchen Lama brought it back to Tibet.

Q

Did some of the officials stay back? For example, the famous Je Jigme who later came with the Communists to Tibet.

A

(Mrs. Taring) Liu Jiemin a Chinese and others had an office in Nanjing and later the dzasa had also come to talk.

Q

Talk about what?

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A

(Mrs. Taring) To talk about establishing an office in Nanjing.

Q

Who met the expenses?

A

(Mrs. Taring) The Chinese met the expenses.

Q

What did the Panchen's people do thereafter? Did they surrender to Xining's Ma Zhuxi?

A

(Mr. Sambo) As mentioned earlier, Khangsar Pönmo wanted to have Yetob as her husband, while the Sichuan Chairman Liu wanted to send someone else. So some differences arose between them. As a result they could not continue to stay in Sichuan so they went to Xining since they could not get along well with Sichuan's Liu Zhuxi. They stayed in Xining territory under the protection of Ma Zhuxi. They could avoid danger from Liu Zhuxi, but I learned later that they had great difficulty earning their livelihood.

Q

Was it during Reting Rinpoche's period when all these happened?

A

(Mr. Sambo) It was during Reting's period.

Q

Why did Trimön become a shape? Who appointed him? Was it the 13th Dalai Lama or Reting? If Trimön resigned on his own choice, then why did he continue to attend the Kashag even after he was relieved from his post?

A

(Mr. Taring) Probably he wanted to resign.

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Q

Then why did he continue to attend Kashag even after he was relieved from his post?

A

(Mr. Sambo) According to what I heard from my father, Trimön used to visit Reting very often. During one such occasion Trimön told Reting that he had been serving the government for a long time and that now he was very old and it was time for him to take leave from government service. Trimön hinted his feelings to Reting Rinpoche. Reting told Trimön that he himself was too young and inexperienced in the affairs of government, and that although there were others, none compared to you.

Q

Reting even said if you resign there is no way that I can take the responsibility of the government.

Q

(Mrs. Taring) He definitely said that.

A

(Mr. Sambo) So Trimön thought that this was going to work.

(Mrs. Taring) I too heard something like that.

(Mr. Sambo) Trimön thought that if he resigned, Reting would probably promote him to the post of Prime Minister. Probably he had such hope, and with that hope, he sent in his resignation. But when Trimön sent his resignation, Reting accepted it. At that time, Trimön was the shape in charge of building of the stupa for the remains of the 13th Dalai Lama's, and under him there was one Trunyichemmo and one Tsipön. Probably, Dingkhang [tib. lding khang] Talama was the first Trunyichemmo. After Lungshar, my father, was appointed the Tsipön in charge of building the stupa. After the death of Dingkhang Talama, Ramba Thubten Künkhyen [tib. thub bstan kun mkhyen] was appointed in his place. So at time Ramba and Sambo were working under Trimön as Trungtsi. They used to meet in the Kashag.

Once when my father, Ramba and Trimön were in a meeting, Trimön took out a telegram and told them that because he had resigned from the shape post, Chiang Kaishek had sent this telegram requesting him not to resign at all. So such a telegram was shown to them. My father and Ramba, therefore, were put in a difficult situation for if they told him

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not to resign, Trimön would probably make another statement saying that the Trungtsi did not want him to resign. So they could neither say his resignation was for the better, nor they could say anything else. They remained silent for an hour or more. Trimön kept on showing them the telegram and they remained silent.

Q

Later, as you know, Trimön became mentally disturbed or unbalanced. He started wearing a white shamthab and even attended the Kashag in that dress. So was it the relieving him of his responsibility that made him a bit unbalanced?

A

(Mr. Sambo) Even after he was relieved from his post, he continued to attend the Kashag. Although Trimön was relieved with great honor, he was even given the kalön's estate called Kashi Nubling [tib. bka' gzhis nub gling] as a token of gratitude for his service, yet Trimön continued attending the Kashag saying that he had something to talk with them about the Nubling estate. So ultimately Bönshö had to tell Trimön that when you were in the Kashag you decided to resign, although we including Reting Rinpoche requested that you do not do so. Now, since you have been completely relieved from your post, your presence in the Kashag causes inconveniences to us. So Bönshö told Trimön to finish his talk about Nubling or whatever, and requested him not to come to the Kashag after that day. At the same time your seat will be removed from here. Probably Trimön expected that he would be promoted to the post of Prime Minister if he resigned from his shape position.

Q

How could they appoint him prime minister when Langdün was still there? Did they plan to have two prime ministers?

A

(Mr. Sambo) Whatever it may be, Trimön had been thinking that he would be made the prime minister. Trimön was, of course the most powerful minister during that time or a little before that. Even during the time of the Kalön Lama Gendün Chödar [tib. dge 'dun chos dar] of Kündeling, Trimön remained as the chairman of the Kashag. Trimön was reported to have told Prime Minister Langdün once during a meeting, "I am here. First I will speak. If I am not right, then you can speak,"--implying that Langdün should not talk before him.

Q

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How did Shatra Tshipön become a shape?

A

Although Shatra's appointment as a kalön was confirmed, he could not take his post due to his death. As a result, Bönshö was appointed in his place. Bönshö was appointed by Reting.

Q

Who replaced Kalön Lama Gendün Chödar?

A

Trekhang Kalön Lama was appointed in his place. One minister who was not affected during the Reting era was Langchungpa [tib. gnang byung ba].

Q

How were the Trunyangchemmo and Tshipön and shape transferred or appointed during the Regent Reting Rinpoche's era?

A

(Mr. Sambo) Lukhangwa was appointed as the substitute for Sambo.

Q

How were appointments of the Trunyangchemmo, Tshipön, and shape done during Reting's time in office? Was it done by senriy lottery?

A

(Mr. Sambo) Bönshö was probably appointed by this method. Trenthong and Shatra were also appointed by Reting. In 1933, Shatra was in Chamdo when he was appointed. The 13th Dalai Lama had already passed away at that time. Shatra came to Lhasa, but he died before he could take over his post.

Q

How did Shatra go to Powo [tib. spo bo]? He was the governor of Powo (tib. Powo Jikyab [sphyi khyab]). Powo Ganam Gyalpo [tib. spo bo ka rnam rgyal po] was defeated in the war and Shatra was appointed in his place. When was this Ganam Depa [tib. sde pa] replaced or overthrown?

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A

(Mr. Sambo) It was during Reting's time.

Q

When was the British Representative's office set up in Tibet? Was it during the 13th Dalai Lama's time or Reting's?

A

(Mrs. Taring) It was during the time of the 13th Dalai Lama who was very friendly with Sir Charles Bell. Dekyilinga was established at that time. When the 13th Dalai Lama came to Darjeeling, Sir Charles Bell was the British Liaison officer in Darjeeling. Sir Charles used to speak slow Tibetan and he used to talk with the Dalai Lama in Tibetan language. It was in 1921. The year I was to go to school, it was MacDonalld who had come with a trade representative to Gyantse. With them also was a doctor called Kennedy. Sir Charles Bell had an appendix operation and was in poor health. Hence he had brought the doctor with him.

Q

Is it true that the British Representative was set up in Tibet by the Younghusband Expedition?

A

(Mrs. Taring) The British Political Officer in Sikkim visited Tibet from time to time. Such persons like Williamson had come, and when they came, they stayed in Dekyilinga which was rented from Kündeling. Later, they established their Consulate General office and the Tibetan government also set up a Foreign Affairs office. In the beginning, it was the political office and the Consulate General. Major Sherab was the first Trade representative appointed by Sir Basil Gould in Lhasa. Sir Basil Gould and Major Sherab were very close friends. Although Basil Gould's wife had died and he wanted to marry Betty Sherab. Betty Sherab's husband also had died, but she liked Major Sherab rather than Basil Gould. Finally, Major Sherab and Betty Sherab came to Lhasa as husband and wife, probably in 1943.

(Mr. Sambo) I recall a Lhasa street song sung at that time with the words, "When I looked from the corner of the Willow tree at Dekyilinga, the English Sahib with the nose was scary/ Other than the Lhasa girls who are better, if it were us, we would be scared of the

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nose." [tib. bde skyid gling ga'i lcang ma'i zur nas bltas pas/ dbyin ji sa hib sna khug kho la dred pa/lha sa'i bu mo de rang drag pa ma gtogs/ bdag tsho yin na sna khug kho la dred pa] [laughter] [Note: The song was sung from the perspective of someone from Tsang since "bdag tsho" and "dred" are colloquial Tsang dialect]. This was the song sung in Lhasa.

(Mrs. Taring) The Englishman referred to in the song was Mr. Mohun. ??? It was in 1921 when Sir Charles Bell came to Lhasa. Since then the British political representatives continued to visit Tibet until Sir Richardson. Apa Pant visited even after the Chinese had come to Tibet. Apa Pant was taken care of by the Delekrapten people in Shigatse. Delekrapten's people suffered a great deal later because of that.

Q

Who gave the title Dreji Lönchen [tib. 'bras spyi blon chen] (Sikkim Political Officer)?

A

(Mr. Taring) The title was given by themselves. No one else gave them the title. But they were known as the Dreji Lönchen among the Tibetans.

(Mrs. Taring) The title was given by themselves. When Sir Charles Bell came to Tibet, his interpreter was Phala's son Diwan Bahadur, who was the uncle of the present Phala. Diwan Bahadur, who was living in India, came to Tibet as the interpreter of Sir Charles Bell. So it was Diwan Bahadur who gave the title of minister (lönchen) and nobody else. It was not the Tibetan government who gave them the rank of minister, nor did they enjoy political minister's rank in their own government. The title of minister was given by Phala Diwan Bahadur. Gradually they were able to establish very good contacts with Tibet and they continued to hold their rank or title and nobody questioned them. Even Rai Bahadur was given the rank of depön and later he was promoted to the rank of dzasa. This Rai Bahadur was only a bapu in the beginning. He was called Bapu Norbu. But he was clever and efficient and later became the official interpreter of the Political Officer of Sikkim. Finally, he rose to the rank of Assistant Political Officer and came to Tibet. After he was given the rank of depön, he put on the pajok [tib. spa lcog] hair-knot which was the symbol of the lay officials. With the pajok, he enjoyed equal respect with the other Tibetan leaders. Later he became a dzasa, which was achieved through his ability. When Rai Bahadur was given the dzasa rank, he said that although the government of Tibet had given him the dzasa rank, his salary was not enough to maintain the livelihood of a dzasa.

(Mr. Taring) What I remember about Dekyilinga was that first was the Younghusband expedition but then it was discontinued for some time until Sir Charles Bell. Sir Charles

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Bell was the Political Officer of Sikkim, and Tibetan affairs were put under his political jurisdiction by the British government. Actually, the British Trade Agent MacDonald had been staying in Gyantse since the Younghusband Expedition. The British representatives would go between Yadong and Gyantse but they never went to Lhasa. Whenever they wanted to visit Lhasa, they needed permission from Lhasa. Whenever Sir Charles Bell wanted to visit Lhasa, he was required to get permission from Lhasa. Lhasa being the capital city of Tibet, the political officers of Sikkim used to visit Tibet from time to time.

Q

This MacDonald Sahib, was he there since 1903?

A

(Mr. Taring) MacDonald, Hopkinson and Richardson were the British Trade Agents stationed at Yadong and Gyantse. However, they visited Lhasa every second or third year, mainly because Lhasa was the capital city and also to see and talk to the Dalai Lama. After Charles Bells, Weir came in 1932. After that, Williamson came. Anyhow, Dzasa Rai Bahadur continued to stay in Tibet. Rai Bahadur was an ordinary interpreter during the Younghusband expedition. The official interpreter at that time was Yarpa Lobsang, who was the father of Kazi Mingyur [tib. mi 'gyur]. But Rai Bahadur was able to get a higher position in the Political Officer of Sikkim's office through his individual shrewdness and efficiency. Also because of his ability to make close contact and friendships with the Tibetans, he proved very useful to the British. His lively and jolly nature enabled him to mix with the Tibetans very easily. For this reason, Sir Basil Gould brought him to Tibet and left him there. He was promoted from Rai Sahib to Rai Bahadur; the ranks the British gave to their officers. In the Tibetan government he became depön and then later dzasa. This was because the British requested that the Tibetan government give him a government rank. Otherwise how could a foreigner be given the rank of dzasa in the Tibetan government? When he was a dzasa, he used to live in the Muru Nyingpa [tib. rme ru nying pa] house. This was before the Panchen Lama came and Trunyichemmo Dangchen and Tsagserkhang and Delerabten [unclear???]. It was the time Sir Basil Gould left him there. After Basil Gould, Col. Wright and Williamson came and then Dekyilinga was started. Williamson visited South Tibet and died in Tibet and then came Col. Wright. But Bahadur continued to stay in Tibet and the government gave him the rank of dzasa. Rai Bahadur proved very useful for Williamson and Richardson. Before Richardson, Hopkinson and Fletcher came as the trade agents at Gyantse. Normally, the trade agents

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did not come to Tibet, but when the Political Officers of Sikkim visited Lhasa, then they too joined them as staff. Major Sherab and Lablo also remained in Tibet.

Q

When Rai Bahadur stayed in Muru Nyingpa, did he stay as a dzasa of the Tibetan Government or did he stay as a British Official?

A

(Mr. Taring) He stayed as a British Official.

Q

Can we say that Rai Bahadur was the first British representative in Lhasa?

A

(Mr. Taring) He was the one who remained in Lhasa continuously. We cannot call him exactly the British representative, but he was left behind to continue their work. At that time he was not a dzasa. He had no documentary proof to say that they requested the Tibetan government to give him the dzasa rank, but he felt that they had asked the Tibetan government to do it, because with the rank of dzasa, he could have easy access to high government officials and have better knowledge of the things going on. After Rai Bahadur, Sir Sherab and Labdol stayed as the acting representatives. After Sherab and Labdol were withdrawn, Richardson remained in Lhasa. Not only Rai Bahadur, but also Sonam Tomden [tib. bsod nams stobs ldan] also asked for and was appointed as depön. The British did it only for political gains. Otherwise, why would the Tibetan government go out of its way to give official rank to British officers? Not only giving the rank, but also allowing them to wear the pajok and other official dress that went with the rank. Another person called Pemba [tib. spen pa] was also given the rank of rimshi. He was the father of the present well-known doctor Pemba who is living in Darjeeling. After the British left India, Richardson was the last representative.

Q

Major Sherab and Labdol who also stayed in Tibet after Rai Bahadur were not given any government rank, right?

A

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(Mr. Taring) Yes. They did not enjoy any official rank in Tibet. They had come to Tibet on botanical research and visited the Kongpo area. Major Sherab was of Sikkimese origin and Rai Bahadur was a Sherpa.

Q

Did they really visit Kongpo and Pemakö [tib. pad ma bkod]?

A

(Mr. Taring) Yes, they did.

Q

During that period, I heard that some Japanese spies came to Tibet and had reported that Major Sherab and Labdol who claimed to be botanists were not really botanists. They further reported that their objective was not to study the flowers and plants but to study the Tibetan soil and they took a lump of soil to discover uranium. This was reported by the Japanese. Is this true?

A

(Mr. Taring) Whether they took soil or not, they were definitely botanists and they were even members of a Botanist Society in London. Labdol was also not particularly involved because he was the teacher of an English school at Gyantse and I remember going to the school wearing breaches. He was invited by the Tibetan government through the British Trade representatives. He was not even a staff member in the British Trade Agency. There were about twenty students in the Gyantse school and among them Surkhang depön, Derge sey and Delerabten were the better students from Lhasa. There were also Khana [tib. mkhar sna] and Jogtre [tib. lcog bkra] from Gyantse. Major Sherab came first and Richardson came later on. But Hopkinson and Fletcher were only Trade Agents at Gyantse. They did not come to Lhasa as Bureau Representatives. Richardson later came to Lhasa as the Consulate General. After Richardson, Prof. Gokahle came.

Q

He was the one who collected lots of books. He is presently in Poona.

A

(Mr. Taring) Then Mr. Sinha came after Prof. Gokhle. Late in the 1950s we had M.P. Menon followed by Chipal. During the 1959 Uprising, Chipal was there. P.N. Kaul was the

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last representative. After the 1962 Sino-Indian war, they left. If I tell you the sequences of the Political Officers of Sikkim, Sir Charles Bell first came to Lhasa to see the 13th Dalai Lama and then he was able to establish very good relations and he left Rai Bahadur. Then an officer who visited after that was Col. Baily, who was also an army officer during the Younghusband Expedition. After him Col. Wright had come. Then came Williamson who was succeeded by Basil Gould. Basil Gould was followed by Hopkinson, who was a British Trade Agent in Gyantse before he came to Lhasa. Hopkinson came after Basil Gould. Then came Dayal and Kapoor. After Kapoor came Apa Pant. After him came Mr. Lal. These were the Political Officers of Sikkim who visited Tibet. Because of his great contributions to the then British Government of India, Rai Bahadur was given the promotion. Labdol and Maj. Sherab were the first Consulate General. During that period the British Consulate General was first started.

Q

Do you call the office of Labdol and Maj. Sherab, Consulate General?

A

(Mr. Taring) Yes.

(Mrs. Taring) It was called Trade Agent in Lhasa. I still insist that it was called Trade Agent. However, the Trade Agent was only in Gyantse and there was no Trade Agent in Lhasa.

Q

I heard that Chipal was in Gyantse before he came to Lhasa so probably he was the Gyantse Trade Agent.

A

(Mr. Taring) Yes. The Trade Agent stayed in Gyantse permanently and they had their bodyguards, etc. We didn't see them much because we lived in Lhasa. Chrisnape ??? was also one of the Trade Agents.